

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached drawing sheet includes new Fig. 5.

Attachment: One (1) New Sheet.

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are pending in the present application. The drawings were objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) as not showing every feature of the claimed invention. Claims 1 and 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification in view of German Utility Patent No. DE 18 83 789 of Schliebs ("Schliebs"). Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification in view of German Patent No. DE 35 29 131 issued to Heissmeier et al. ("Heissmeier et al."). Claims 4-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification and Schliebs or Heissmeier et al as applied to claims 1-3 above, further in view of U.S. Patent No 3,363,637 issued to Rumbaugh et al. ("Rumbaugh et al.").

One new drawing figure has been added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Objections to the drawings

The drawings were objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) as not showing every feature of the claimed invention. Fig. 5 is submitted herewith for the Examiner's consideration. Fig. 5 shows the screen surface varying in height along a respective dividing wall, as presented in claim 3 and described in the specification at paragraph [0019]. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added.

Withdrawal of the objection to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a) is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1 and 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification in view of German Utility Patent No. DE 18 83 789 of Schliebs ("Schliebs"). Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification in view of German Patent No. DE 35 29 131 issued to Heissmeier et al. ("Heissmeier."). Claims 4-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's specification and Schliebs or Heissmeier et al as applied to claims 1-3

above, further in view of U.S. Patent No 3,363,637 issued to Rumbaugh et al. ("Rumbaugh et al.>").

Applicant's specification in the "Background" section at paragraphs [0005] and [0006] describes how in prior art salt containers vertical flow of salt through the chamber can lead to heavy compaction of salt, causing obstruction of the screen. Also, narrow screens and high salt heights can lead to such clogging.

Schliebs appears to show a container 1 having a water inlet 6, a brine outlet 4, and a screen 5 having salt disposed above the screen. Inlet water apparently flows upward through a water inlet 6 and downward through the salt and the screen 5, while brine flows out through brine outlet 4. See Fig. 1.

Heissmeier appears to show a container 1 having water a inlet 10, a brine outlet 20, and a screen 6 for holding salt above the screen. Inlet water apparently flows through a water inlet 10 and downward through the salt and the lower portion of screen 6, while brine flows out through brine outlet 20. See Fig. 1.

Rumbaugh describes a vent 42. See col. 4, lines 72-3, and Fig. 1.

Independent claim 1 of the present application recites

a first and a second dividing wall disposed in the salt container, the first dividing wall extending from the first side wall to the bottom and the second dividing wall extending from the second side wall to the bottom so as to divide the salt container into a water distribution duct including the water inlet, a salt chamber, and a brine collecting duct including the brine outlet, the first and second dividing walls each including a respective screen surface in a respective region of the respective dividing wall adjacent to the bottom, the screen surfaces being disposed a v-shape relative to each other, the screen surfaces separating the water inlet and a brine outlet from each other.

It is respectfully submitted that none of Applicant's specification Background section, Schliebs, Heissmeier, or Rumbaugh teaches or suggests respective screen surfaces of dividing walls disposed in a v-shape, where the dividing walls divide the salt container into a water

distribution duct including the water inlet, a salt chamber, and a brine collecting duct including the brine outlet, as recited in claim 1. In contrast, Applicant's specification Background section merely describes salt containers divided into a salt chamber and a water inlet by a horizontal screen. See Applicant's specification Background section at paragraph [0005]. A v-shaped screen configuration with the water inlet, a salt chamber, and a brine collecting duct as recited in claim 1 is not taught or suggested. Regarding Schliebs, this reference merely appears to show a screen 5 dividing a container 1 into two sections: a water inlet and salt section above the screen and a brine outlet section below the screen. See Schliebs, Fig. 1. Dividing walls having v-shaped screens, which walls divide the salt container into 1) a water distribution duct including the water inlet, 2) a salt chamber, and 3) a brine collecting duct including the brine outlet, as recited in claim 1, is not taught or suggested. Regarding Heissmeier, this reference also merely appears to show a screen 6 dividing an inner portion of container 1 into two sections: a water inlet and salt section above the screen and a brine outlet section 18 below the screen. See Heissmeier, Fig. 1. Dividing walls having v-shaped screens, which walls divide the salt container into 1) a water distribution duct including the water inlet, 2) a salt chamber, and 3) a brine collecting duct including the brine outlet, as recited in claim 1, is not taught or suggested. In fact, in both Schliebs and Heissmeier inlet water appears to flow vertically downward through the salt disposed above the screen, with the attendant danger of heavy compaction of salt, causing obstruction of the screen, as described relative to other prior art in paragraph [0005] of the present specification. With the screen and wall configuration recited in claim 1, inlet water flow passes only through a region where the salt is compacted downward due to the inclined, converging regions of the dividing walls, so additional salt can always slide down from above. A nearly constant brine concentration may thereby be achieved independently of the salt level, as described in the present specification at paragraph [0010]. Nor does Rumbaugh teach or suggest the above-recited features of claim 1. Because all of Applicant's specification Background section, Schliebs, Heissmeier, and Rumbaugh are missing at least the above-recited features of independent claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that any combination of these references, to the extent proper, could not render claim 1, or any of dependent claims 2-6, obvious.

Withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on
respective combinations of two or more of Applicant's specification Background section,
Schliebs, Heissmeier, and Rumbaugh, is respectfully requested.

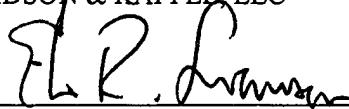
CONCLUSION

It is respectfully submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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